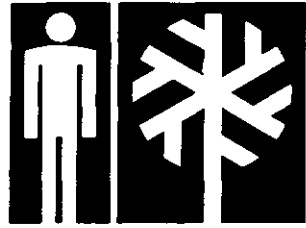


wilderness recommendation



NATIONAL PARK / KENTUCKY

WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION



**Mammoth Cave
National Park
Kentucky
August 1974**

RECOMMENDATION

NONE OF THE LANDS IN MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK ARE SUITABLE AT THIS TIME FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION AND INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM BECAUSE MOST OF THE AREA HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN THE PAST AND THE IMPRINT OF MAN'S WORK IS STILL SUBSTANTIALLY NOTICEABLE.

THIS RECOMMENDATION IS BASED UPON CAREFUL STUDY OF THE NATIONAL PARK, THE VIEWS PRESENTED AT THE PUBLIC HEARING, AND THE WRITTEN RESPONSES TO THE PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS STUDY, WHICH IS INCLUDED IN THE APPENDED HEARING OFFICER'S REPORT.

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ROADLESS STUDY AREAS

Within the park are four roadless areas of 5000 acres or more: Unit A, 5637; Unit B, 16,621; Unit C, 11,899; and Unit D, 5028, a total of 39,185 acres. Some of the characteristics that affect wilderness designation are described below.

ROADLESS AREA A

This roadless area lies along the west side of the park and comprises all park lands west of Houchins Ferry road. This very irregularly shaped tract contains approximately 5637 acres, measuring about 4 miles long by 3 miles wide.

Present recreational use of this area is mostly in the form of fishing and boating, with picnicking at Houchins Ferry. The park's draft master plan calls for increasing the opportunities for these uses by providing more and better facilities at Houchins Ferry, and by establishing foot trails and primitive campsites in the scenic Nolin River Valley after the Green River bridge and connecting roadways are built.

Both the Green and Nolin Rivers in this roadless area are impounded behind Lock and Dam 6. Because of this impoundment and because of the future recreational activities mentioned above, no part of Roadless Area A is proposed for wilderness designation.

ROADLESS AREA B

Containing about 16,621 acres, Roadless Area B is the largest of the four in the park. It is also of irregular shape, but is about 5-1/2 miles across from west to east and from north to south. Elevations vary from 827 feet on Collie Ridge to 420 feet at the mouth of Buffalo Creek.

Visitor use of Area B is now confined almost exclusively to trips on the sightseeing boat *Miss Green River*, which makes a round trip during the travel season from Mammoth Cave Ferry to Sand Cave Island. Some people enjoy boating and fishing on the Green River.

These uses will continue. The Green River bridge and connecting roadways – provided in the draft master plan – will cross the west side of Area B.

Excluded from Area B, but having influence on it, are Good Spring and Joppa Churches and their associated cemeteries, the Collie Ridge Road corridor and other road corridors, and the fire lookout tower on Brooks Knob. Also excluded is the triangular tract of about 340 acres at Maple Springs that is bounded by roads. It contains a ranger station and a deer reproduction study laboratory; and the master plan calls for establishing primitive campsites here for the use of hikers.

Like Area A, Area B was farmed, pastured, and logged before the park's establishment, and all of the 12-mile segment of the Green River within this tract is slack water because of Dam and Lock 6. Therefore, this area is not suited for wilderness designation at this time.

ROADLESS AREA C

This 11,899-acre unit, measuring about 3 by 5 miles, lies in the northeast part of the park. Its elevations range from 744 feet at Goblin Knob to about 450 feet at the Green River.

Adjacent to Area C are two fire lookout towers, the Great Onyx Civilian Conservation Center, and Mammoth Cave Church and cemetery. A primitive campground is located at the old Dennison Ferry site, and the draft master plan calls for its improvement by adding boat launching facilities for hand-propelled craft so that visitors may use the uppermost 9 miles of the Green River in the park, which is free flowing. The developed portions of Great Onyx, Crystal, and Colossal Caves are to be opened for limited use to those desiring a semi- "wild-caving" experience.

On Flint Ridge, in the roadless area, is the powerline supplying electricity to Mammoth Cave; it must remain. Also located here are the springs and wells that supply domestic water for the park. The

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water from these sources is pumped into reservoirs. This extensive collection and distribution system must remain until another water supply becomes available.

Because of present and past land uses, Area C does not qualify presently for wilderness designation.

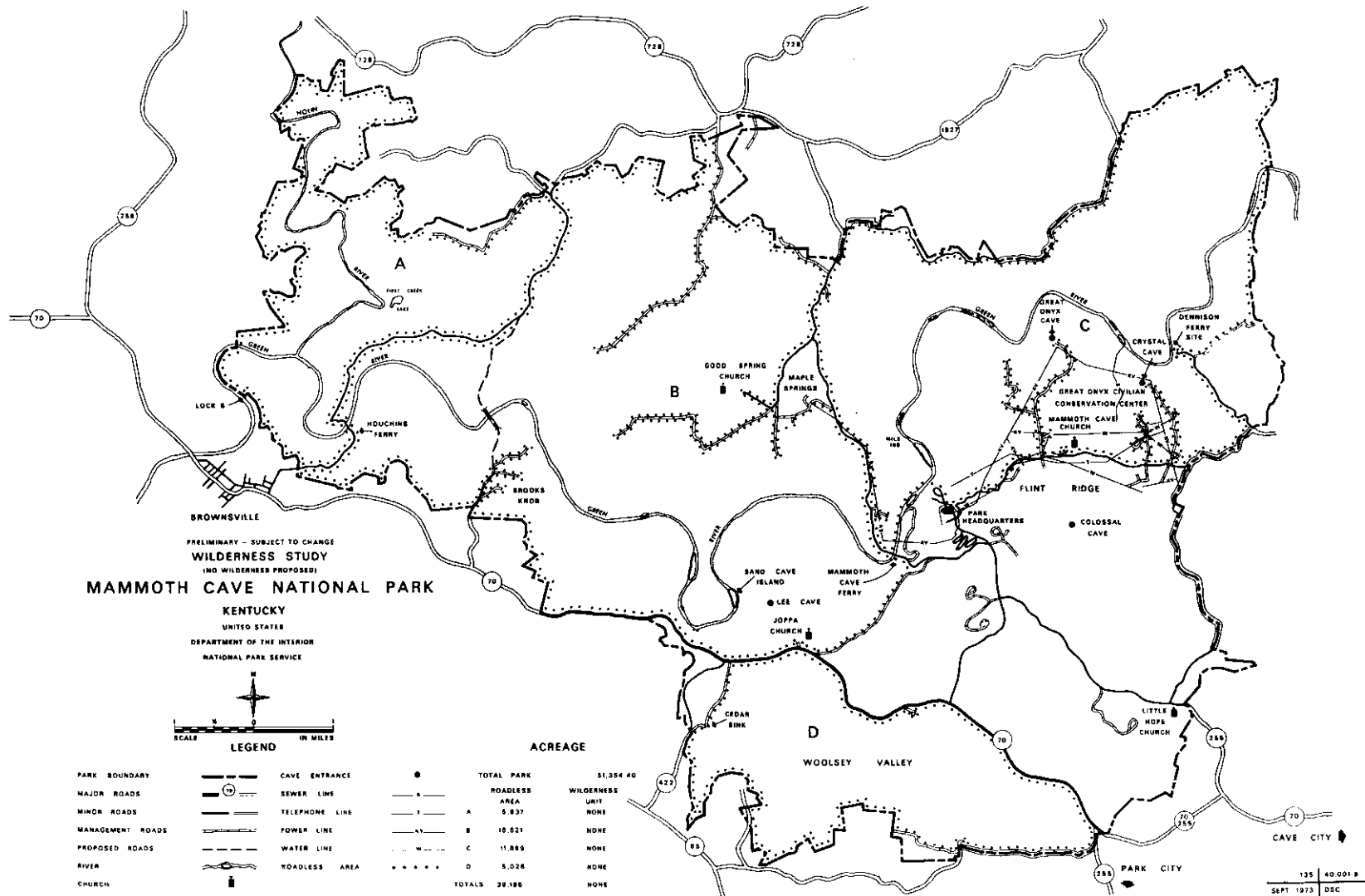
ROADLESS AREA D

Containing only 5028 acres, this is the smallest of the roadless areas. Woolsey Valley, within this area, is known as a fine example of solution valley physiography. It was formed by the coalescence of many sinkholes.

Except for visitors viewing Cedar Sink, there is no public use of Area D, and no new trails or other uses have been proposed in the draft master plan.

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Old maps show that practically all of the valley was cleared of forest and was being farmed when the park was established. While the forest is recovering over much of the area, erosion gullies, fences, chimneys, former wagon roads, and briar patches are still apparent, thus disqualifying most of Area D as wilderness until a later date.





OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

AUG 23 1974

Dear Mr. President:

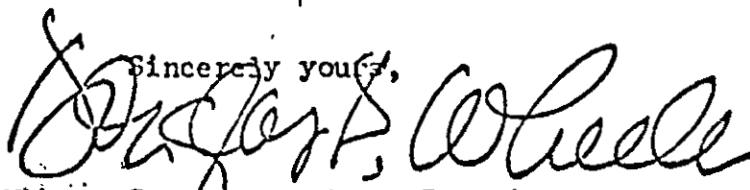
The Wilderness Act (78 Stat. 890) directs the Secretary of the Interior to recommend to the President areas within its jurisdiction which are suitable for designation as wilderness. Having reviewed Mammoth Cave National Park, we conclude that none of the park area should be designated wilderness at this time.

Mammoth Cave National Park, a 51,354-acre area in south-central Kentucky, was established by Act of Congress in 1926. Its focus is the world's most extensive lineal cave system, which is toured by more than 600,000 persons per year. The park also offers some of the finest riverscapes in the state, along the Green and Nolin rivers. The park harbors abundant wildlife, particularly Virginia white-tailed deer. Prior to the establishment of the park, the surface lands of the Mammoth Cave area were settled and farmed. At present virtually all of the surface lands of the park still display marked signs of man's presence there. We believe that several more decades will be required before these lands can return to their natural condition. The subterranean portions of the park contain extensive undeveloped caverns. There is no legal barrier to the designation of subterranean lands as wilderness. However, many of the caverns are unexplored and largely unknown. New knowledge gleaned from exploration may entail changes in management and use of the caverns as a whole. To recommend any of these areas for wilderness designation prior to their exploration and prior to an assessment as to how they fit into the park as a whole would, we believe, subordinate the values for which the park was established to wilderness concerns. For these reasons we recommend that no part of Mammoth Cave National Park be designated wilderness at this time. We shall reassess the situation as exploration progresses and report back to the Congress at a later date.



In accordance with the terms of the Wilderness Act, a public hearing on the recommendation was held at Bowling Green, Kentucky, on May 29, 1974. A summary of the hearing record and written expressions received is contained in the enclosed brochure. Complete records have been compiled and are available for inspection by the public.

Sincerely yours,


Acting Secretary of the Interior

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Enclosure